Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? At what age did you start writing? Have you always written poetry? Who/what first inspired you to start writing? Who are your favorite poets?

I write poetry in English and Urdu. I started writing at the age of 10 and haven't stopped since – allowing for prolonged bouts of writer's block – I am primarily a poet but also write prose and book reviews, adaptations of Urdu poetry and I edit and archive things. My inspiration has always come out of my life, my surroundings and my people. The list of my favourite poets is colossal so I shall spare you!

How do you first start writing a poem? Does it come to you out of the blue, or do you have a set time where you meet with your Muse each day and let the words just … come? Has your idea of what poetry is changed since you began writing poetry?

Lana Del Rey said 'My muse is very fickle. She only comes to me sometimes, which is annoying.'* I would say that the Muse always come out of the blue in the unlikeliest of places at the least appropriate times. I find that I can work best from dawn onwards, as the day gets on the motivation decreases. Though I do get the odd days/nights when I work non-stop to get something accomplished (while the inspiration lasts) that is nearly ready but which I have been putting off for too long but sadly, those times are few and far between! These days my poems usually begin their genesis as words or phrases in the notepad on my smartphone or as they have always done on scraps of paper which are usually lost and which I sometimes have to waste time trying to recover. I write on anything that is nearest because the longer I leave it the more there is a danger of it being forgotten. There seems to be a secret law of nature for distractions and diversions set to occur at such times: for the phone to buzz (never otherwise as I don't communicate by phone) or someone (from Porlock) would be knocking at the door (I'm a recluse and can go easily unvisited for months on end). I do have some neglected notebooks but they rarely get written in. A poem would sometimes come to me whole but that is a rare occurrence. Usually there are around a dozen drafts (more for the longer poems I have been writing lately such as 'Smoke & Mirrors' the final draft of which was completed in a laborious 18-hour non-stop jaunt). My method of writing prose is very different: I read everything there is to read about what I am writing and write down the

relevant information and references, then I start writing whilst making notes in the margins as I go along which is all copied onto neat drafts that become untidy very quickly and so on. There are usually several drafts of these too. This haphazard method of writing can be very frustrating and I have tried to be more organised and lineal but it just doesn't cut it for me.

I don't think my idea of poetry has changed radically over the years except that the internet has given me access to a wider range of poets.

Are you on Facebook or Twitter or any other social media? Does that fit into your writing life, and if so, how?

I am on Facebook and Twitter et al but I have a love-hate relationship with social media that is conflictive: literature offers a one-to-one relationship with people one does not have to meet in real life, the internet gives people a false sense of intimacy with those they do not know. I have a website and an email, I attend literary events and give readings and meet other writers and audiences but I feel we live in a changing world where the social networks demand more and more of our time and I am weary of and bored by people who need to publicise every minute detail of their lives, what they are wearing or eating or what their pets are doing every minute of the day. It might work for some but as a writer I find it is too much distraction and too intrusive to one's privacy to be constantly available every moment of the day. If I were to do that then when would I find the time to do the writing?

Do you have a writing group or community of writers you share your work with? Who are they? What are you reading right now?

I used to attend poetry workshops early in my career but I'm pretty much a one-man job which can be troublesome at the best of times. I was recently invited to join the lovely Poets and Dreamers.

What words of encouragement can you offer other poets who are trying to get their work noticed?

Keep trying.

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* Lana Del Rey, (22nd October 2013). http://www.nylon.com/articles/lana-del-rey-november-cover